

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims of this application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently amended) A method of operating a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS) communications network, comprising:

providing a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node, the first node being associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node being associated with a second LATA;

associating a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint and the first and second identifiers being first and second MPLS labels, respectively, the first one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a second IEC enforceable by a governmental body; and

routing packet traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint;

wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the method further comprising:

receiving a selection from the customer of the first IEC; and

marking the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier.

2 - 5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently amended) ~~The method of Claim 4,~~

A method of operating a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS) communications network, comprising:

providing a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node, the first node being associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node being associated with a second LATA;

associating a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint and the first and second identifiers being first and second MPLS labels, respectively, the first one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a second IEC; and

routing packet traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint;

wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the method further comprising:

receiving at least one routing criterion from the customer; and

marking the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier or the second identifier based on the at least one routing criterion.

7. (Currently amended) A system for operating a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS) communications network, comprising:

means for providing a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node, the first node being associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node being associated with a second LATA;

means for associating a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint and the first and second identifiers being first and second MPLS labels, respectively, the first one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a second IEC enforceable by a governmental body; and

means for routing packet traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint;

wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the system further comprising:

means for receiving a selection from the customer of the first IEC; and

means for marking the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier.

8 - 11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently amended) ~~The system of Claim 10;~~

A system for operating a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS) communications network, comprising:

means for providing a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node, the first node being associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node being associated with a second LATA;

means for associating a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint and the first and second identifiers being first and second MPLS labels, respectively, the first one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a second IEC; and

means for routing packet traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint;

wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the system further comprising:

means for receiving at least one routing criterion from the customer; and

means for marking the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier or the second identifier based on the at least one routing criterion.

13. (Currently amended) A computer program product for operating a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS) communications network, comprising:

a computer readable storage medium having computer readable program code embodied therein, the computer readable program code comprising:

computer readable program code configured to provide a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node, the first node being associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node being associated with a second LATA;

computer readable program code configured to associate a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint and the first and second identifiers being first and second MPLS labels, respectively, the first one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a second IEC ~~enforceable by a governmental body~~; and

computer readable program code configured to route packet traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint;

wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the computer program product further comprising:

computer readable program code configured to receive a selection from the customer of the first IEC; and

computer readable program code configured to mark the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier.

14 - 17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently amended) ~~The computer program product of Claim 16,~~

A computer program product for operating a multiprotocol label switching network (MPLS) communications network, comprising:

a computer readable storage medium having computer readable program code embodied therein, the computer readable program code comprising:

computer readable program code configured to provide a plurality of redundant links between a first network node and a second network node, the first node being associated with a first local access and transport area (LATA) and the second node being associated with a second LATA;

computer readable program code configured to associate a first identifier with a first one of the plurality of redundant links and a second identifier with a second one of the plurality of redundant links, the first and second identifiers being associated with a regulatory constraint and the first and second identifiers being first and second MPLS labels, respectively, the first one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a first inter-exchange carrier (IEC) and the second one of the plurality of redundant links being associated with a second IEC; and

computer readable program code configured to route packet traffic that is marked with the first identifier to the first one of the plurality of redundant links and traffic that is marked with the second identifier to the second one of the plurality of redundant links so that operation of the communications network is in compliance with the regulatory constraint;

wherein a portion of the traffic is associated with a customer, the computer program product further comprising:

computer readable program code configured to receive at least one routing criterion from the customer; and

computer readable program code configured to mark the traffic associated with the customer with the first identifier or the second identifier based on the at least one routing criterion.